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EDUCATION AT THE SCHOOL OF ETHICS

Educational gatherings are usually intensely professional. Few attend them except teachers, and few others are expected. Large throngs may swell membership lists when excursion features are attractive, but at the meetings themselves these throngs are seldom present. Perhaps this is not to be regretted. Yet it is also a good thing for education to be discussed in other than professional aspects, and by others than those whose vocation it constitutes. In one corner of New England this last summer such a discussion was actually held, to the pleasure and profit of all who participated in it. This was at the School of Applied Ethics at Plymouth, Mass., during the second week in August.

This school has now been in existence four years, though its sessions were omitted during the summer of 1893 by reason of the Chicago Exposition. It covers four weeks and is organized in three departments,—economics, ethics, and the history of religions. To each of these an hour is assigned on each day. Recognizing that education is a science of conduct, the managers arranged that for one week of the four, the present year, the hour assigned to ethics should be devoted to the discussion of the ethical relations of education. A special committee was organized to arrange the programme and conduct the meetings. The conference on education, as thus provided for, included besides the six morning lectures three that were given in the evening, and after each of these a vigorous discussion occurred. The innovation proved highly successful. The educational hour was the most fully attended of any, the interest was sustained throughout the week, and the total membership of the school appears to have been increased about one-fourth by this conference. Of the audience at least four-fifths were not teachers, but clergymen, graduate students from the universities, or men and women drawn from business or leisure by interest in social and philanthropic problems.

The central topic of the summer's work at the school was the labor problem. The educational conference, therefore, began with a course of three lectures by President MacAlister of the

Drexel Institute, on "The Relations of the School to the Labor Problem." These relations he viewed as industrial, political, and ethical. He declared industrial training to be a natural consequence of the advancement of science and the industrial arts, and claimed for manual training that it not only develops intensity and exactness of perception, cultivates attention, and coördinates the action of mind and body, but also unconsciously establishes habits of industry. It tends to confer an all-around education, at the same time helping the boy to choose the calling for which he is best adapted. Viewing education politically, the speaker thought the obligation binding on a free nation to bring children within the pale of the public school. Education and even the highest opportunities of culture should become as easy to the working-man's son as to the child of wealth. The value of teaching civics and economics was emphasized. Continuation schools for workmen were advocated. The value of technical education was shown from a political point of view. Switzerland, in spite of her lack of raw materials, excels in prosperity because her people are highly educated. Holland, too, is another example of the close relation between education and the development of prosperity and wealth. In the United States, also, it is in education that we shall find the most direct method of working out the labor problem. In speaking of the ethical relations of the school, Dr. MacAlister insisted that our public schools must be secular, as in France, must not include religious instruction, as in Germany, because the state is a secular institution. Alluding again to manual training, he extolled its ethical value. It disciplines the will. The boy gets no credit for anything but true work, hence his judgment is squared. He also gains self-respect and a love of work for work's sake. In closing the lecturer declared pessimism to be the one unpardonable sin. The future is bright and hopeful in view of the power of education as an agency for progress.

The first evening lecture was on "Economic History as an Element of School Teaching," by Professor W. J. Ashley, of Harvard. He called attention to the increasing prominence of economics, but was of the opinion that it would be unwise to teach it to young children. Greater stress might, however, be placed on the economic side of history with older pupils. A letter was read from Professor John B. Clark, of Amherst, asserting

that it was possible and advisable to extend economic teaching even into elementary schools. Then arose an interesting debate. Professor Henry C. Adams of Michigan University would limit the teaching of economic history to high schools, but dissuaded the teaching anywhere below the college of economic theory, which is now unsettled in all its fundamentals. Somewhat singularly, he thought the best preparation for economic study in the college would be the study in the schools of the branches that acquaint the pupils with organic life, as biology; for society is an organism. Is not this carrying an analogy too far? Professor Colby of Dartmouth, Mr. Page of Boston, and others followed. The current of thought was mainly in favor of incidental, rather than formal, instruction in economics in secondary and elementary schools.

In the second evening lecture, Dr. Wm. G. Anderson of Yale dealt with "The Ethical Value of Physical Training." From his lecture it became evident that while ethical results are positively claimed for all the systems of physical training, the exponents of all are at a loss to say with definiteness what they are. Certain things can, however, be said. Gymnastics develop self-control, fortitude, and presence of mind. Athletics demand them even more. To ensure success in them, men must lead a good life. Strict laws of training exclude all forms of evil. The healthful effects of a captain's voice and example are very great. The gymnasium can be made, and at Yale is made, a centre of good influences. In the ensuing discussion Dr. Prince of Newton made a valuable point in declaring that to keep gymnastics from becoming fatiguing and dispiriting, the element of play must be present. Our school gymnastics often err against nature in this respect.

Perhaps the most stimulating address of all was that of Professor Felix Alder, under the title of "Organic Education." His central thought was that one can best do his duty to society by faithfulness to his particular calling. "Vocational duty is the backbone of morality." The choice of vocation has a more decisive and far-reaching influence on character than any other act. Every one should have a paramount purpose. "Concentration is salvation; dissipation is destruction." To most men it is vocation that supplies this paramount purpose. The one thing to try

for in education is to make every boy and girl capable of doing some one thing extremely well. To this end the idea of social service should be made the dominant idea of the school, each pupil should be led to discover for what particular kind of service he is fitted, and should be prepared for that service. The schools should become talent-saving stations along the shores of poverty, rescuing from mental death many who are now left to sink in the waves of ignorance.

Another address was by Professor Wm. H. Burnham, of Clark University, on "The Educational Movement in Europe in Relation to Social and Political Movements." He traced the progress of the democratic idea in the development of the school and the university, first in England, then in Germany, and finally in France. He showed that the modern educational movement cannot be understood except as a part of political and social development. Habit is strong; ideals conflict with past customs, and the school lags. In Germany the conservative and democratic ideas are in especial conflict, but everywhere the school shares the unrest of the times. There must be a coördination of the different factors of education, and the school must do more to form character.

One evening Professor George H. Palmer, of Harvard, gave a charming address on "The School as an Ethical Instrument." He holds that the primary aim of the school is not moral but intellectual, and that the school should hold mainly to its intellectual work. The ethical results to be expected should come unconsciously to the child, chiefly through his relation to the teacher as one more complete than himself and to the school as a social unit. Such ethical results are of great value. Formal instruction in ethics should be delayed until reasoning has been well developed and, inasmuch as it tends to self-consciousness, should be used with extreme caution. It is doubtful if we are helped much in resisting passion and special temptation by what we know of ethical systems; it is habit and the influence of high ideals that supply restraint. Ideals should be fixed through the lessons of literature and habits established under the unconscious pressure of the personality of the teacher and the atmosphere of the school. In the discussion that followed, Dr. Adler expressed his belief that more can be done by direct instruction than the lec-

turer had intimated. He had found lessons drawn from the Old Testament very useful in character building. The Odyssey also was a source of good material. The present writer asked if the term, literature, as used by Professor Palmer should not be interpreted as inclusive of history, inasmuch as biographies and other historical narratives furnish admirable ideals for school use. He also drew attention to the value of "cases of discipline" as occasions for specific moral training. Professor Hanus, of Harvard, objected to the lecturer's view that the primary aim of school education is intellectual. The main purpose of the school, in his opinion, is the discovery and development of aptitudes and the supply of high motives. These have a distinctly ethical character. Dr. Prince believed that both were right. While the intellectual aim is the primary one, the ethical results are undoubtedly the most important. Mr. Ingraham and Miss Keyes continued the discussion. Then Professor Palmer answered objections, reiterated his main contention, and particularly urged the filling of the memory with noble passages of literature as a means of moral help.

The closing lecture was by Mr. James L. Hughes, of Toronto, on "The Ethical Element in the Kindergarten." This element he found to be the predominant one in Froebel's plan. Indeed it was because Froebel believed that the child had glorious possibilities for good that he designed the several stages of child play and occupation as helps to the development of that good. This thought was illustrated with much elaboration.

Thus the conference came to an end. The committee in charge of it, Messrs. Dutton, Page, Peabody, Miss Wheelock, and the writer, have been freely congratulated on its success. It secured the examination of some school problems by thoughtful men and women who have diverse points of view. It has put courage, also, into the heart of teachers as they have noted how thinkers from the fields of economics, religion, and sociology alike are looking to public education for help in settling social difficulties. Evidently the school is becoming increasingly an element to be considered by all students of social dynamics. In view of the interest aroused, the experiment is likely to be repeated on a larger scale at the next session of the School of Ethics.

Cambridge, Mass.

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